

**FRAMINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**Desmarais Room** **November 1, 2005**

**Present**

Diane M. Throop, Chair  
 David F. Miles, Vice Chair  
 Laurie Jeanne Carroll, Secretary  
 Philip A. Dinsky  
 Richard J. Weader II

**Also Present**

Christopher Martes, Superintendent  
 Walter McClennen, Assistant Superintendent  
 Rick Gallagher, Director of Transportation  
 Anna Cross, Director of Family Support Services  
 Don Kennedy, New England School Development Council  
 Mark Abrahams, The Abrahams Group  
 Shelley Metzenbaum, The Abrahams Group  
 Steve Kruger, Benchmarking Working Group  
 Barry Bograd, Benchmarking Working Group  
 Andy Limeri, Benchmarking Working Group  
 Barry Kling, Benchmarking Working Group  
 Matt Handverger, FHS Student Representative  
 Andy Feldman, FHS Student Representative  
 Ann Greenberg, Administrative Assistant  
 Charlie Breitrose, Reporter, MetroWest Daily News

**Absent**

Cesar Monzon  
 Pam Richardson

**AGENDA**

- I. Meeting with the Public
- II. Minutes for Approval: Open & Executive Session Minutes – October 11, 2005
- III. Committee of the Whole – Survey Agenda
- IV. Joint Meeting with FHS Student Advisory Committee
- V. Announcements & Recognitions
  - A. FHS Students of the Month of October 2005
- VI. Discussion Items
  - A. Long Range Facilities Planning
  - B. Student Transportation
    1. School Transportation Update
    2. Citizen's Agenda Request – Alan Mandel
  - C. District Strategic Planning
    1. Benchmarking Report – The Abrahams Group
- VII. Action Items
  - A. Policy Revisions
    1. School Field Trips – Revised Policies & Regulations
  - B. The Education Cooperative (TEC) – FY06 Membership
- VIII. Reports of Committees

- A. Policy Subcommittee – Mr. Miles
- B. Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee – Mr. Weader
- C. High School Building Committee – Mr. Dinsky
- IX. Bills & Payroll
- X. Executive Session
- XI. Reconvene in Open Session for Purpose of Adjournment

## **ACTION**

Chair Diane Throop convened the meeting at 7:35 p.m. with five members present. Mr. Monzon and Mrs. Richardson were absent.

### **I. MEETING WITH THE PUBLIC**

The Chair asked whether any member of the public would like to comment on an item that was not on the agenda.

Lisa Merloni, FTA Co-President, thanked FTA members who have volunteered their time for fall festivals in the schools. The annual FTA retirement dinner for recent retirees was held last week. A social for new FTA members is upcoming.

### **II. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the open session minutes of October 11, 2005.

**MOTION: Moved by Ms. Carroll, seconded by Mr. Dinsky, that the School Committee approve the open session minutes of October 11, 2005. Vote in favor was 5-0.**

Chair Diane Throop asked for a motion to approve the executive session minutes of October 11, 2005.

**MOTION: Moved by Ms. Carroll, seconded by Mr. Dinsky, that the School Committee approve the executive session minutes of October 11, 2005. Vote in favor was 5-0.**

### **III. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – SURVEY AGENDA**

The Chair asked whether there were any changes to the agenda. There were none.

### **IV. FHS STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

FHS Student Government officers Matt Handverger (President), Rachel Finn (Vice President), Andy Feldman (Co-Treasurer), and Erica Helinek (Secretary) reported on high school events including the October 21<sup>st</sup> rally and dance; a school-wide election scheduled on November 8; a “mix-it-up” lunch on Tuesday, November 15 sponsored by the International Club; and an FHS drama production of *The Crucible* this weekend. Student Government Advisor Nicole Adams was also present.

### **V. ANNOUNCEMENTS/RECOGNITIONS**

#### **A. FHS Students of the Month – October 2005**

Dr. Martes recommended that the School Committee commend Roseane Silva (Class of 2007) as a Framingham High School Student of the Month of October 2005.

Roseane received a plaque from the School Committee and a round of applause from all present. FHS Student of the Month Colleen Riley (Class of 2006) was not present, and her recognition will be rescheduled to the second meeting of the month.

**MOTION: Moved by Ms. Carroll, seconded by Mr. Dinsky, that the School Committee recognize and commend Roseane Silva (Class of 2007) on being selected as a Framingham High School Student of the Month of October 2005. Vote in favor was 5-0 with Ms. Carroll, Mr. Dinsky, Mr. Miles, Mrs. Throop, and Mr. Weader in favor.**

## VI. DISCUSSION ITEM

### A. NESDEC DEMOGRAPHY AND ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

Don Kennedy presented a report entitled *Demography and Enrollment Projections*, a 10-Year Enrollment Projection developed by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) for the Framingham School Department. Framingham's population over the past three to four years has remained level at approximately 66,000, and could stay in the same range through 2020. Framingham's median age is rising. In the 1990's the 0-34 age group shrank, and the 35-39 age group grew. Framingham is below the state average in the number of K-12 children enrolled per population. Framingham has fewer students per dwelling compared to the statewide average. Framingham's birthrate has risen over the past four years, but statistically, only 2/3 of children born in Framingham enroll in kindergarten five years later. Framingham's population is rather transient with a 52% turnover of its housing stock in the 1995 to 2000 timeframe. Mr. Kennedy noted that Framingham is close to so-called "build out" and most of the land has been developed.

With respect to a FPS enrollment projection, Mr. Kennedy outlined five assumptions, without impact of additional housing development, for the period of 2005 to 2014:

(1) Annual number of births of residents will level off at about 985 –995 per year;

(2) Kindergarten registration will continue at 68% of births of 5 years previous; Grade 1 class will grow by 1%; Grades 2-5 class will shrink by 2%; Grade 6 class will shrink by 5%; Grades 7-8 will remain stable; Grade 9 will shrink by 9%; and Grades 10-12 will shrink slightly;

(3) Housing growth over the next ten years will continue to be the same rate as the recent past (about 50-60 units per years);

(4) Turnover of existing housing stock and rentals will continue at same pace as recent years (about 700-800 single family homes and 350 condos/year);

(5) Framingham students in charter schools (about 35 per grade in 6-8); vocational schools (about 120-150 per grade), non-public schools and in home schooling (about 2-3 per grade) will continue at present levels.

For the 2005-2014 timeframe, Mr. Kennedy said the most conservative enrollment projection, without the impact of additional housing development, shows district

enrollment shrinking by 151 students from K to 12. Mr. Kennedy said a more likely scenario is that the district could be expected to grow by 387 students by 2014. The enrollment projections do not include special education out-of-district placements. Enrollment is driven by housing turnover, in/out migration, and births. Mr. Kennedy noted that English Language Learner student enrollment had grown over significantly over the past ten years. However, there are fewer newcomers in Framingham over the past three years most likely due to the current housing costs

Mr. Kennedy compared school building capacity over a ten-year time frame at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. He noted that school buildings cannot house the number of students housed ten years ago due to major differences in programs, for example, classroom libraries, technology, separate science and art rooms, handicapped accessibility and storage needs.

Mr. Dinsky thanked Mr. Kennedy for his report. He said the statistics would help the School Committee to understand the district's enrollment. He recommended that the School Committee err on the side of being less conservative.

Ms. Carroll said the elementary enrollment projections would be most informative for the School Committee with respect to building capacity decisions.

Mrs. Throop said NESDEC's building capacity charts were very helpful because they demonstrate that school building capacity is impacted by changes in the way students are educated.

Dr. Martes thanked Mr. Kennedy and the NESDEC team for the report. He suggested that a next step would be a joint School Committee/Long Range Facilities Planning Committee meeting to review building capacity issues.

The Chair declared a recess at 8:45 p.m.  
The meeting was reconvened at 8:53 p.m.

## **B. STUDENT TRANSPORTATION**

### **1. School Transportation Update**

Rick Gallagher, Director of Transportation, Anna Cross, Director of Family Support Programs, and Assistant Superintendent Walter McClennen joined the School Committee for a school transportation update. Mr. McClennen noted that FY06 bus fee revenues are \$250K, the amount budgeted. The busing program and the fee system are running well.

Anna Cross said Meryl Dannenberg and the Parent Information Center staff deserve credit for fielding many questions from parents on the bus program. This year, bus fee payments were due in June and July and bus passes were issued in early August. Questions from walkers regarding bus passes are ongoing.

Mr. Gallagher thanked Transportation Department staff and all school bus drivers who were asked three years ago to take on the responsibility for the bus pass program. He reported on statistics for student walkers purchasing bus passes. This year, the district

has 1,800 walkers. In Year 1 of the bus pass program, 80 walkers purchased passes; in Year 2, 110 walkers purchased passes. This year, 111 walkers have purchased passes to date. If the program continues next year, Mr. Gallagher said it may be advisable to include a student picture on the bus pass.

Mr. Miles noted that less than 10% of walkers purchased bus passes this year.

Ms. Cross said 158 students had applied for the bus pass this year, but only 111 students ultimately purchased a pass. She advocated that the district offer a credit card payment option for parents because it would give families more flexibility to pay busing fees and kindergarten tuition on their own schedule.

Mr. Dinsky said he would like to eliminate the fee as part of the next budget cycle because he did not believe that the district should charge pupils to get to school.

## **2. Citizen's Agenda Request – Mr. Alan Mandel**

Alan Mandel presented a proposal that the School Committee reconsider student walking distances. He said students who need bus transportation due to the length of their walking distances are unfairly excluded from bus transportation. Mr. Mandel recommended establishing a target goal of the following walking distances: elementary school – a half-mile; middle school – three-quarters of a mile; high school – one mile. Mr. Mandel said there have been changes in walking conditions over the years impacting student safety, student health, students' time, and household demographics. He said reasonable walking distances should not depend on the school budget.

Mr. Mandel cited the benefits of lowering the walking thresholds including (1) improving safety for students; (2) reducing student injuries from backpacks; (3) saving time for parents and students; (4) increasing local school selection through School Choice; (5) reducing traffic and pollution; (6) reducing total transportation costs to Framingham residents; and (7) reducing inequities among families. (Note: A copy of Mr. Mandel's proposal is on file in the School Committee office with the records of this meeting.)

Mr. Dinsky said Mr. Mandel's proposal, if accepted, would increase busing costs by \$300K to \$400K. He noted that only 158 students applied for busing this year out of 1,800 walkers district wide.

Mr. Miles noted the Policy EEA (Student Transportation Services) was established in 1973 and has been revised a number of times over the years. The School Safety Officer approves all walking distances. The Police Department has determined that all walking distances and routes are safe. Mr. Miles asked whether Mr. Mandel had presented his proposal to the Board of Selectmen or the Police Department. Mr. Miles noted that the district's policy is more liberal than state law, which mandates school busing at distances of 2 miles or more only. Mr. Miles said it may be a good idea to talk to the Framingham Police Department about the policy, and he made a motion to refer the policy to the Policy Subcommittee for review.

Ms. Carroll said she appreciated Mr. Mandel's concerns about the safety of children.

Mr. Weader noted that the School Department's FY06 budget was \$400K in deficit, and adding a bus could mean laying off a teacher. He said he would prefer a first class school system to a first class bus system.

David Levin, Framingham Bus Drivers Association President, disputed a number of Mr. Mandel's points. Mr. Levin said schools are closed when streets are unsafe and sidewalks are unplowed. He cited the number of district snow days last year, when sidewalks were not ready for students. He noted that elementary students are bused if they have to cross a dangerous road, even if they live below the walking thresholds. Mr. Levin said if parents elect to drive their children to school, it is a choice, not a fee.

Mr. Dinsky said he would vote against the motion because he had never received a single call on the issue from a parent. Secondly, he noted that the School Committee provided a busing option to families of student walkers, and only 10% of these students took advantage of the option.

Robert Bolles, Town Meeting member, Precinct 6, said Framingham should cut, not increase buses. He said Framingham taxpayers cannot afford any more tax increases, and they cannot afford health and pension benefits for bus drivers. Mr. Bolles said the Town should privatize its bus drivers. He asked the School Committee to cut buses and get back to neighborhood schools.

Mrs. Throop said a reasonable walking distance is not based on the budget. She noted that the district would have to give up something educationally to get to Mr. Mandel's proposed walking distances. But, she said she would vote in favor of the motion because it might be worth talking about the policy.

Dr. Martes said the Policy Subcommittee could look at the policy and consider budget implications.

Mrs. Throop said the School Committee looks at options such as privatization every time the bus contracts come up. She noted that there is an intangible that the district receives by having bus drivers and crossing guards as our employees because these employees become invested in the community.

**MOTION: Moved by Mr. Miles, seconded by Ms. Carroll, that the School Committee refer Policy EEA (Student Transportation Services) to the Policy Subcommittee for review. Vote in favor was 4-1 with Mr. Dinsky opposed.**

The Chair declared a recess at 10:25 p.m.  
The meeting was reconvened at 10:39 p.m.

The Chair said consideration of revisions to district school field trip policies would be postponed until the next meeting due to the late hour.

### **C. Benchmarking Report**

Mark Abrahams and Shelley Metzenbaum presented that final draft Benchmarking Report to the School Committee. Dr. Martes thanked the Benchmarking Working Group

for their input and the Abrahams Group for their report.

Ms. Metzenbaum said Framingham is at the top relative to its demographic peers and Framingham education dollars are well spent. She said Framingham has a high cost range, but other communities with lower costs do not outperform it. Ms. Metzenbaum said the Town is getting good performance for its expenditure. Amherst-Pelham is the only community of nineteen benchmarked communities that outperforms Framingham. If the School Committee wishes to further explore the benchmarking data, it could investigate whether there are opportunities for savings by looking communities with similar characteristics who are operating with fewer dollars.

Mr. Dinsky thanked the Abrahams Group and the Benchmarking Working Group. He said he welcomed the opportunity to see how Framingham is doing in comparison to other districts and was pleased that the district is doing well.

Dr. Martes said he plans to send the report with a cover letter to all the benchmarked towns and cities. (Framingham was benchmarked against nineteen communities with similar demographic characteristics. The nineteen communities were: Amherst-Pelham, Ayer, Beverly, Holbrook, Hull, Marlborough, Medford, Northbridge, Peabody, Quincy, Randolph, Shirley, Stoughton, Waltham, Watertown, Westhampton, Westport, Winthrop and Woburn.) Dr. Martes would like to create partnerships with these communities in order to look closely at the benchmarking results. He said MASC and MASS might be able to assist in this process. The Superintendent said the state needs to look at the Benchmarking Report as an example of quality benchmarking.

Mrs. Throop said the communities could be contacted and a partnership could be established with various districts among the benchmarked group. She said she would be particularly interested in comparing results for closing the achievement gap for minority and low-income students as well as best practices in general.

Mr. Dinsky said the School Committee must make a benchmarking presentation to Town Meeting; forward a copy of the report to all benchmarked towns to identify who is interested in taking a next step with the data; and send a copy of the report to the DOE.

Ms. Carroll said an executive summary of the Benchmarking Report should be posted on the FPS website and the report results should be discussed at the monthly PTO Presidents meeting.

Mrs. Throop said it would be interesting to know how benchmarked districts coped with the loss of state aid over the past three years.

Mr. Weader said it would be interesting to know the pay scales for the benchmarked communities.

Steve Kruger, Town Meeting member and Benchmarking Working Group member, said he was very excited about the report. He called the report a milestone for the public arena discussion, and said Framingham is in the vanguard nationally as a result of commissioning the report. Mr. Kruger said Framingham is expensive, but we are

getting good value for the dollar especially when considering Grade 10 MCAS results and college acceptances. He said Grade 4 MCAS results do not look as good, and those results need further investigation.

Mrs. Throop said Grade 4 results should be considered with respect to sub-groups compared with other benchmarked districts.

Andy Limeri, Town Meeting and Benchmarking Working Group member, said it was a great study. He suggested that district contact the benchmarked districts to build relationships.

The Chair asked for a motion to continue the agenda past 11:00 p.m. for additional agenda items including the Superintendent's Report and TEC membership.

**MOTION: Moved by Ms. Carroll, seconded by Mr. Dinsky, that the School Committee hear an agenda item on TEC membership and the Superintendent's Report after 11:00 p.m. Vote in favor was 5-0.**

## **VII. ACTION ITEMS**

Dr. Martes recommended that the district renew its membership in The Education Collaborative (TEC) for a second year. He cited benefits of the membership including 'job-a-like' professional development programs for superintendents, business managers, and curriculum directors. Dr. Martes said Mrs. Richardson, the School Committee's delegate to TEC, informed him that she supported membership renewal. Dr. Martes said the district is breaking even on TEC membership costs versus services. Dr. Martes said he would plan to report on 2005/2006 TEC membership benefits and services at the end of the current school year.

After a brief discussion, the following motion was voted:

**MOTION: Moved by Ms. Carroll, seconded by Mr. Miles, that the School Committee approve an FY06 membership in The Education Cooperative (TEC). Vote in favor was 5-0.**

Dr. Martes said he would provide the Superintendent's Report at the next meeting.

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn.

**MOTION: Moved by Mr. Dinsky, seconded by Ms. Carroll, that the School Committee adjourn. Vote in favor was 5-0.**

The meeting ended at 11:18 p.m.